



Foreign Agricultural Service

**GAIN Report**

Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 1/22/2003

GAIN Report #SN3005

## **Singapore**

# **Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and**

## **Standards**

## **Country Report**

## **2003**

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### **Report Highlights:**

**Sale and import of food products in Singapore are regulated by the Singapore Food Act. This Act regulates all sale of food sold at the retail level. The regulations cover standards, particular labeling requirements ,expiry date marking, the use of additives and preservatives, chemical residues and the microbiological standards for food products.**

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Kuala Lumpur [MY1], SN

**DISCLAIMER:**

This report was prepared for the Office of Agricultural Affairs of the USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service in Singapore for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While every possible care was taken in the preparation of this report, information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since its preparation, or because clear and consistent information about these policies was not available. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify the full set of import requirements with their foreign customers, who are normally the best equipped to research such matters with local authorities, before any goods are shipped. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCTS IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY'S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

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## **I Food Laws**

### ***Overview***

The sale and import of food products in Singapore are governed by the Sale of Food Act (Chapter 283) and the Food Regulations. All food, drinks and edible agricultural products, including food ingredients, whether locally manufactured and imported to Singapore, are required to comply with the food standards and labelling requirements stipulated in the Food Regulations.

The Food Regulations have been developed locally and are continually monitored to take into account new product developments, new ingredients, new production techniques, new technology and other matters of importance, e.g. relevant disease outbreaks or food contamination incidents in actual or potential supplier nations. They are not based on any particular country's regulations but adopt and modify laws and standards that are applied internationally to suit Singapore's local conditions and requirements. Reference is made to CODEX and the laws and standards of developed countries and regions, including the USA and European Union. The broad goals of the food laws, policies, procedures and enforcement practices are to facilitate the supply of safe and wholesome foodstuffs to Singapore.

Singapore's Food Regulations are amongst the most up-to-date in Southeast Asia. This arises because of a continuous program of monitorship and updating undertaken by a number of different government departments and agencies. Discussions in November 2002 indicate that a new set of food regulations is likely to be issued in the next two years. These regulations will bring together the main legislation issued in 1988, all subsidiary legislation promulgated since that date and new provisions on matters that have been under review over the past 3 to 5 years.

Although not confirmed at the date of writing, the new provisions are likely to cover some aspects of ASEAN food law harmonisation, functional foods, health claims relating to specific conditions and diseases, genetically modified foods and other biotechnology developments that affect foodstuffs. It is, however, highly likely that mandatory nutritional labelling will be introduced at some stage in the next 2 years. This is likely to take the form of nutritional contents per serving size and 100 grams rather than use declarations based on recommended daily allowances (RDA).

Singapore's food laws are strictly enforced from the food health and safety point of view. As such, they do not form any trade barrier to products that are safe and wholesome.

Licences are required to be obtained by importers of meat and meat products, fish and fish products, fresh fruits and fresh vegetables to Singapore. Additionally, processed food and drinks are required to be registered with the authorities by importers prior to importation. Special import licences are required for certain items, e.g. irradiated foods and certain artificial sweetening agents. These are required as part of efforts to control food health and safety as well as enforce the food regulations rather than as a barrier to

trade with Singapore. A range of other foods, including genetically modified foods, are listed for special declaration to, and attention by the authorities, e.g. inspection, sampling and licensing.

The government departments and agencies that are involved in developing, promulgating and enforcing the Food Regulations include:

- Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (“AVA”). This statutory body has a number of divisions that are responsible for enforcing the laws relating to:
  - < Meat and meat products, fish and fish products and fresh fruits and vegetables.
  - < Processed food and drinks. The former Food Control Department of the Ministry of Environment became the Food Control Division (“FCD”) of the AVA in 2002.
- The Health Promotion Board. This statutory body is actively involved in the development of laws and policies relating to food and drinks of all types. It maintains close links with the AVA and Ministry of Health.
- International Enterprise, Singapore. The IE Singapore is the agency that operates the TradeNet system which integrates the import, export and transshipment documentation processing to expedite clearance of all types of cargo entering or leaving Singapore.

A Food Advisory Committee also exists which comprises experts from a range of different fields. This committee is referred to when the main controlling authorities, e.g the AVA’s Food Control Division, has a case where broader consideration is required, e.g. the review and approval of new food ingredients before they can be imported into Singapore. The AVA’s Regulatory and Health Planning Division handles the policy and regulatory issues relating to meat, poultry, seafood and fresh produce.

If any food, drink or ingredient falls outside the scope of the current food regulations, it is necessary to seek permission for import from the relevant authority before approval can be obtained from the IE Singapore for its import into Singapore.

It should be noted that:

- Singapore prohibits the commercial import and sale of chewing gum. At the time of writing, mid November 2002, it has been announced that this ban will be lifted on gum sold for medical use under the new free trade agreement that is being negotiated with the USA.
- High excise duties are levied by the Customs & Excise Department on the CIF import value of alcoholic drinks in an attempt to moderate the consumption of such products. Currently, local beer and stout have a slight advantage over some imports because import duty is levied on competing products imported from countries that do not have free trade agreements with Singapore.
- There is a 5% (3% prior to 31 December 2002) goods and service tax (“GST”) which is levied

on CIF value of all food, drinks and edible agricultural products destined for the Singapore market. This has to be paid before goods are allowed into Singapore's customs territory. Special provisions in the GST law exist for products that are to be re-exported from Singapore.

### ***Standards and Particular Labelling Requirements for Food***

Singapore's Food Regulations are increasingly comprehensive in their coverage. Part IV titled "Standards and Particular Labelling Requirements for Food", inclusive of its amendments, provides specific product definitions, ingredient content standards and labelling requirements for a wide range of products that fall under the following product categories:

- Flour, bakery and cereal products.
- Aerating ingredients.
- Meat and meat products.
- Fish and fish products.
- Edible fats and oils.
- Milk and milk products.
- Ice cream, frozen confections and related products.
- Sauce, vinegar and relishes.
- Sugar and sugar products.
- Tea, coffee and cocoa.
- Fruit juices and fruit cordials.
- Jams.
- Non-alcoholic drinks.
- Alcoholic drinks.
- Salts.
- Spices and condiments.
- Flavouring essences and extracts.
- Flavour enhancers.
- Special purpose foods.
- Miscellaneous foods.
- Rice.

Special purpose foods include products that are consumed by persons with a special diet. The category includes products such as infant foods and diabetic foods. Miscellaneous foods include products such as agar-agar, custard powder, edible gelatin and fish and prawn crackers.

As Part IV of the Food Regulations is too comprehensive and detailed to provide meaningful summarisation in this report, it is advised that the reader consult the relevant section of the regulations for information that is required about their own specific product or products. As the regulations are regularly reviewed and updated it is recommended that this be done in consultation with a knowledgeable importer based in Singapore.

## **II Labelling Requirements**

## **A. General requirements relating to prepacked food and drinks**

Singapore's food regulations require that all prepacked food products, including drinks, sold in the Singapore market be properly labelled. The law requires that the following basic labelling information be provided in English:

- Common name or description of the product.
- List of ingredients in descending order of proportions by weight.
- Net weight or volume.
- Name and address of manufacturer, importer, packer and distributor.
- Country of origin of the product.
- Additional information as required by the Food Regulations.
- Expiry date marking for a specific range of food products, including chocolate.

The Food Regulations contain general and specific restrictions over health claims. At the time of writing, i.e. mid November 2002, nutritional labelling is only required when a nutrition claim is made. (See next section for more information).

Some key points to note on labelling are as follows:

- Name or description of the product:

The common name of the food or drink or a description which is sufficient to indicate the true nature of the product should be used.

If trademarks, brandnames or any of name not specific to the actual nature of the product appear on the label, they can only be used in conjunction with the proper common name or description of the product.

- List of ingredients:

A complete list of ingredients should be disclosed on each product's label.

If respective quantities are not disclosed they should be listed in descending order of their proportion by weight, i.e. the ingredient listed at the top will be the one that weighed the most.

If Tartrazine is included in the product, it must be stated in the list of ingredients as "Tartrazine" or Colour (102) or Colour (FD&C Yellow #5) or similar wording.

- Net quantity:

The label of all products, except intoxicating liquors and soft drinks, should include an indication of the quantity of the contents.

The minimum quantity of the food in the package should be printed on the label, expressed in terms of volumetric measures, (ml, litres) or net weight (g or kg) or any other measure.

In the case of a weight measure, suitable words such as “Net” shall be used to describe the manner of measurement.

- Wording size for label:

The wording providing consumers with information on product name/description, ingredients, quantity and the disclosure on tartrazine should be printed in letters of not less than 1.5 millimetres in height.

- Name and address of manufacturer or importer

Singapore importers are required to include their own contact information, e.g. name, street address and phone number, on the package/label for reference by the Singapore authorities and consumers. It should be noted that the use of stick-on labels is no longer permitted after a change in labelling regulations was introduced by the FCD on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002.

Locally manufactured food and drinks are also required to comply with this regulation by including their own contact details on the label.

Telegraphic, facsimile and post office addresses are not acceptable under the food regulations.

- Country of origin of the product

The labels of imported foods must contain the name of the country of origin.

The names of cities, towns or provinces are unacceptable as indications of country of origin under this regulation.

- In addition to the requirement that a complete list of ingredients should be disclosed on each product's label, the following additional information is currently also required by the Food Regulations:

The label of any product containing the following generic additive products shall adequately make disclosure of content in the specific manner prescribed by the relevant regulations:

! Artificial sweetening agents (Refer to Regulation 18 of the Food Regulations).

The label of any food, drink or artificial sweetening agent containing aspartame is required to include the following words or words to the same effect:

“PHENYLKETONURICS: CONTAINS PHENYLALANINE.”



The label on a package of Royal Jelly or product containing Royal Jelly should include the following words or words to the same effect:

“WARNING - THIS PRODUCT MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR ASTHMA AND ALLERGY SUFFERERS”.

The label of foods which have been irradiated, including those which include irradiated ingredients are required to be clearly disclose that they are irradiated or contain irradiated ingredients. The labels of such products should include the following words in letters not less than 3 millimetres in height:

“TREATED WITH IONIZING IRRADIATION” or  
“IRRADIATED (*insert name of food here*)”

It should be noted that from time to time, new regulations may be introduced which expand on this section of the Food Regulations.

- Expiry date marking for a specific range of food products

The labels of certain products are required to disclose expiry dates in a prescribed form. More details on this are provided in a following section of this report titled “Other Regulations and Requirements - Expiry Date Marking”.

- Declarations about nutritional content and content of vitamins and minerals.

Extensive regulations also exist with regard to declarations that are to be made on the labels of products where claims are made about nutritional content and vitamins and minerals. These are overviewed in the following sections of this report titled:

- ! Requirements Specific to Nutritional Labelling.
- ! Health Claims and Claims About Vitamins and Minerals

The word “pure” or any word of similar significance cannot be used on any food or drink label unless the product is free from other added substances or is of a composition, strength and quality required under the Food Regulations.

- If a recipe or pictorial serving suggestion is provided on any label, the label should clearly include the word “Recipe” or phrase “Serving Suggestion” close proximity to the relevant recipe or picture. These words are to be printed in letters not less than 1.5 millimetres in height.
- Prepacked foods which form part of a package or container, e.g. a hamper, are required to be labelled in a manner prescribed by the Food Regulations.

The labelling laws are enforced by the Food Control Division of the AVA. The laws also cover certain aspects of advertising of processed food and drinks in Singapore, in particular claims that are made about individual products. Product labels are required to comply with Singapore's Food Regulations before they are imported into Singapore customs territory. The labelling requirements cover all forms of prepacked products, including those which are supplied to food service establishments, except for some products which are officially exempt, e.g. foods that are retailed in a loose format.

Currently, many U.S. products can enter with the standard U.S. label although this depends upon whether labels on individual products comply with the regulations covering specific additives, expiry dates and claims about products (see following section of this report). For this reason, there may be incidences where specific differences in U.S. and Singapore law require a labelling change or additional declaration to be made on a standard U.S. label. U.S. exporters are advised to liaise with their importers and/or the Food Control Division of the AVA to confirm and clarify their specific requirements.

## **B. General requirements relating to raw produce and dressed birds**

The Food Regulations also include labelling laws for raw produce and dressed birds. Raw produce is defined as meat, minced or chopped meat, organs, fish, crustaceans and shellfish in a raw, i.e. fresh, form. These regulations require that:

- Packages of raw produce be labelled to disclose the date of packing.
- Packages containing dressed birds, e.g. chicken, ducks, etc., be labelled to disclose the date of slaughter.

These regulations are enforced by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority.

## **III Requirements Specific to Nutritional Labelling**

Currently, nutrition labelling is only required when a nutrition claim, whether general or specific, is made about a product, e.g. when a product claims to be a "source of energy", "source of protein", "low in calories" or "sugar free".

The Food Regulations require that when nutrition claims are made the product's label must include a nutrition information panel specified in the regulations (see below) or in other similar form that is acceptable to the Food Control Division of the AVA.

<b>Nutrition Information Panel (Specified Form)</b>
<b>NUTRITION INFORMATION</b>

Servings per package ( <i>here insert the number of servings per package</i> )* Serving size ( <i>here insert the serving size</i> )*		
	Per Serving* or	Per 100 g (100 ml)
Energy	kcal, kJ or both	kcal, kJ or both
Protein	g	g
Fat	g	g
Carbohydrate	g	g
( <i>here insert the nutrients for which nutrition claims are made or any other nutrients to be declared</i> )**	g	g
Notes: *: Applicable only if the nutrients are declared on a per serving basis. **: Amounts of sodium, potassium and cholesterol are to be declared in mg. Source: Food Regulations (Thirteenth Schedule)		

The regulations relating to disclosure about nutrition claims are complex and require consideration on a case by case basis. U.S. exporters are therefore advised to consult their importers and/or the Food Control Division of the AVA about the contents of their nutrition information panels and compliance with Singapore's Food Regulations.

It should be noted that there is a possibility that the Government will introduce a mandatory nutritional labelling law at some stage in the future. The introduction of such a law has been in discussion for a period of time and will ultimately depend on consideration of local needs and requirements for such a law and also any international standards that might be set by CODEX in future. In view of this, U.S. exporters will need to monitor the situation together with their importers to ensure that their labels will comply with any future laws on nutritional labelling.

The nutrition labels currently used by Singapore manufacturers, e.g. the major bakeries, may provide some indications of the future nutritional labelling requirements. The major bakeries now utilise nutrition information panels which disclose nutritional content for a serving size and 100 grams of the product. The panel defines a serving size and provides contents data for energy, protein, fat, cholesterol, carbohydrate, dietary fibre, sodium content and various vitamins and minerals. It is understood that future labels are unlikely to require disclosure of RDA's (recommended daily allowances).

#### **D. Health claims and claims about vitamins and minerals**

##### ***Health claims***

The Food Regulations prohibit food product labels from disclosing the following types of claims:

- Claims that a food has therapeutic or prophylactic properties, unless permitted by the

authorities.

- Claims that a food will prevent, alleviate or cure any disease or condition affecting the human body. For example, the Food Control Division of the AVA comment that the phrases “effective in preventing or curing cancer” or “this product lowers the blood pressure” are objectionable claims.
- Claims that a food can improve physical condition or performance. For example, the Food Control Division of the AVA comment that the phrase “a runner can run faster after consuming the food” is objectionable.

Labels cannot include any words, claims (whether explicit or implicit), designs or devices that could be interpreted as advice of a medical nature.

Enforcement of the regulations relating to health claims on food and drink labels are currently made with reference to the Medicine (Advertisement & Sale) Act which bans the packaging and leaflet inserts of imported pharmaceuticals from including claims or implications covering a range of diseases and conditions (See Appendix C to this report). Discussions with government officials indicate that a list similar to that found in this Act is likely to be included in the Food Regulations at some stage in the near future.

### *Claims on vitamins and minerals*

The Food Regulations contain extensive regulations covering disclosures that are required to be made on the labels of products that claim to contain vitamins and/or minerals or that claim to be rich in vitamins and/or minerals. For this reason, it is important that U.S. exporters and their Singapore importers review the imported products’ compliance with these regulations on a case by case basis.

The Food Regulations include official definitions about vitamin and mineral content in the form of:

- Table I which provides an official list of specific vitamins and minerals, a daily allowance for each and the basis measurement for each daily allowance figure (see Appendix D to this report).
- Table II which provides an official list of food and drinks and reference quantities for the purposes of the statements about vitamin and mineral content (see Appendix E to this report).

In broad terms, the labels of food and drinks that claim to contain or that are claimed to be rich in vitamins and/or minerals are required to include statements to substantiate the claims. Some key points to note are:

- No claim on the presence of vitamins or minerals can be made on the label of any food or drink product unless the manufacturer or supplier can substantiate that the reference quantity of the products set out in Table II of the Food Regulations (see Appendix E to this report)

contains at least one-sixth of the daily allowance for specific vitamins or minerals as laid down in Table I of the Food Regulations (see Appendix D to this report).

- The wording of these statements is required to make reference to the information in the Table I and Table II to the Food Regulations as well as other regulations regarding special situations regarding vitamin and mineral content.
- The Food Control Division of the AVA comment that the minimum labelling requirement for a food or drink which complies with the Food Regulations on content is a statement similar to “200 ml of this orange juice contains 15 mg of Vitamin C”. Compliance with vitamin and mineral labelling regulations can also be effected through the use of a nutrition panel designed to comply with these regulations.

#### **IV Packaging and Container Requirements**

All containers used to pack food and drinks that are capable of being labelled should include a label that complies with the provisions of the Food Regulations.

The Food Regulations include a provision that bans the use of any appliance, container or vessel that is intended for use in storage, preparation or cooking of food if it contains or is capable of imparting lead, antimony, arsenic, cadmium or other toxic substance, including vinyl chloride and products known to be carcinogenic, mutagenic, teratogenic, poisonous or injurious, to any food stored, prepared or cooked in it.

The use of any lead piping for the conveyance of beer, cider or other beverages or liquid food is prohibited.

#### **V Food Additive Regulations**

Foods that contain additives that are not permitted by the Food Regulations cannot be sold in Singapore. Trade in food additives, i.e. the import, sale and manufacture of such products, is only allowed if the additives conform with the provisions of the Food Regulations. If the Food

Regulations do not contain reference to a particular additive, the authorities will make reference to the specifications recommended by the Joint Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organisation (WHO) Expert Committee on food additives.

The Food Regulations contain comprehensive regulations relating to food additives and their use in food and drinks manufactured, imported and sold in Singapore. These regulations cover:

- Anti-caking agents, anti-oxidants, artificial sweetening agents (covered elsewhere in this report), chemical preservatives, colouring matter, emulsifiers, stabilisers, flavouring agents, flavour enhancers, humectants, nutrient supplements, sequestrants;

- General purpose additives.
- Gaseous packaging agents.

The regulations provide:

- Official definitions of additives.
- Details of additives that are permitted for use in Singapore, including their permitted uses/proportions of use.
- Specific labelling requirements.

The regulations on food additives are to be read and interpreted with reference to the following detailed schedules to the Food Regulations:

- Fourth Schedule, which covers permitted anti-oxidants, their use and the amounts that are permitted in specific foods, including processed foods, unprocessed foods and some food ingredients. Currently, this covers the use of 8 different antioxidants in a range of foods.
- Fifth Schedule, which covers a range of specific permitted chemical preservatives, their use and the amounts that are permitted in specific foods, including processed foods, unprocessed foods and some food ingredients. Chemical preservatives are divided into 2 classes:
  - ! Class I chemical preservatives such as common salt, sugars, vinegars and acids and ethyl alcohol and potable spirits.
  - ! Class II chemical preservatives are other preservatives which are dealt with in the Fifth Schedule. Currently, this covers the use of 7 different preservatives in 55 different types of food and drinks.
- Sixth Schedule, which defines permitted synthetic and other food colours. Currently, this covers 17 different food colouring products.
- Seventh Schedule, which defines permitted emulsifiers and stabilisers. Currently, this (as amended) covers 30 different categories of emulsifiers and stabilisers comprising well over 60 individual products.
- Eight Schedule, which defines permitted nutrient supplements. Currently, this covers 55 different nutrient supplements.
- Ninth Schedule, which defines permitted general purpose additives. Currently, this covers 85 different general purpose additives.

A number of additives are dealt with separately from those in the above referred Schedules:

- Anti-caking agents: Foods may contain the following anti-caking agents at concentrations of not more than 2% on a dry basis:
  - ! Calcium or magnesium carbonate.
  - ! Calcium hydroxyphosphate.
  - ! Edible bone phosphate.
  - ! Magnesium stearate.
  - ! Magnesium trisilicate.
  - ! Calcium, sodium aluminium, sodium calcium aluminium or calcium aluminium silicates;  
or
  - ! Silicon dioxide.
- Anti-foaming agents. These are banned in any food or drink product, except in edible oils which may contain the anti-foaming agent known as Dimethyl Polysiloxane in an amount not exceeding 10 ppm (parts per million).
- Flavouring agents:
  - ! Only natural and synthetic flavouring agents which are contained in permitted solvents namely diethyl ether, ethyl acetate, ethyl alcohol, glycerol, isopropyl alcohol, propylene glycol, tricetin and water. The solvents other than water are required to comply with the British Pharmacopoeia standard.
  - ! Prohibited flavouring agents include coumarin, tonka bean, safrole, sassafras oil, dihydrosafrole, isosafrole, agaric acid, nitrobenzene, dulcamara, pennyroyal oil, oil of tansy, rue oil, birch tar oil, cade oil, volatile bitter almond oil containing hydrocyanic acid and male fern.
- Flavour enhancers: Only ethyl maltol, monosodium salt of L-glutamic acid, sodium and calcium salts of guanylic and inosinic salts and L-cysteine are permitted in foods sold in Singapore, including imported products. The Regulations define product specifications and include some official limitations on usage of some of these products.
- Humectants: Glycerine is banned from use in foods, including imported products, unless permitted by the authorities.
- Sequestrants: Citric acid, phosphoric acid, tartaric acid and the calcium salts of these acids as well as glycine are permitted for use in foods. The use of Calcium Disodium Ethyleneadiaminetetraacetate is restricted to canned fish, mayonnaise, salad dressing, French dressing and margarine and subject to official limits in the Food Regulations.

Only carbon dioxide, nitrogen and helium are allowed to be used as gaseous packaging agents under the provisions of the Food Regulations.

It should be noted that the content of these Schedules will change with time because the authorities periodically update them to take account of new products, new risks and new scientific findings on food additives. It is therefore recommended that U.S. exporters and their importers review the content of the most up-to-date schedules in liaison (as necessary) with the relevant authorities to ensure that their products fully comply with the Food Regulations.

## **VI Pesticide and Other Contaminants**

The Food Regulations include a number of regulations that are specific to the incidental constituents of food and drinks.

The specific regulations on the content of pesticides and other contaminants in food and drinks are to be read and interpreted with reference to the following detailed schedules to the Food Regulations:

- Tenth Schedule, which defines the maximum amount of pesticide content that specific types of food and drinks may contain. Currently, this covers 113 different pesticides and their permitted residues in several hundred processed food, drink and agri-foods.
- Eleventh Schedule, which defines the maximum amount of arsenic, lead and copper that are permitted in a range of products. Currently, this covers 36 different types of processed food, drink and agri-foods.

It should be noted that the content of these Schedules will change with time because the authorities periodically update them to take account of new products, new risks and new scientific findings on pesticides and other contaminants in foods. It is therefore recommended that U.S. exporters and their importers review the content of the most up-to-date schedules in liaison (as necessary) with the relevant authorities to ensure that their products fully comply with the Food Regulations.

### ***Content Standards for Antibiotics, Oestrogen and Toxins***

Foods, drinks or agrifood product, including imported products, containing detectable antibiotic residues or their degradations products are not permitted to be sold or traded in Singapore. Nisin may, however, be employed in the preservation of cheese and canned foods that have been sufficiently heat treated to destroy *Clostridium botulinum* spores.

Meat and meat products that contain residues of the following oestrogen compounds are not permitted to be imported, sold or traded in Singapore:

- Diethylstilbestrol (3, 4-bis(p-hydroxyphenyl)-3-hexene).
- Hexoestrol (3, 4-bis(p-hydroxyphenyl)-n-hexane).
- Dienoestrol (3, 4-bis(p-hydroxyphenyl)-2, 4-hexadiene).



Food, drinks and agrifood products sold in Singapore, including imported products, are not permitted to contain any detectable amounts of aflatoxins or any other mycotoxins.

### ***Mineral Hydrocarbon Usage and Content***

The Food Regulations include comprehensive regulations of mineral hydrocarbon usage and content in foods.

The overriding rule is that mineral hydrocarbons are not to be used in the preparation of foods sold in Singapore, including imported products. Some exceptions to this rule, inclusive of related limits on the content of mineral hydrocarbons, based on measurements in terms of parts per hundred or ppm (parts per million), do exist for the following products:

- Dried fruits.
- Citrus fruits.
- Sugar confectionery contain mineral hydrocarbons as a polishing or glazing agent.
- Foods which contain the above products.
- Chewing compounds that contain solid mineral hydrocarbons.
- Whole pressed cheese or portions that contain mineral hydrocarbons on their rind.
- Eggs, i.e. chicken or duck, that have been dipped in mineral hydrocarbons as a preservative.
- Other foods that may have been necessarily exposed to mineral hydrocarbons during the course of their preparation.
- Foods that contain residues of mineral hydrocarbons as a result of the use of a solvent in their manufacturing process, e.g. decaffeinated coffee products, spice oleoresins, edible vegetable oil.

It should be noted that the shells of eggs that have been coated with mineral hydrocarbons are required to be marked with the word “SEALED”.

U.S. exporters and their importers that deal in products which may contain mineral hydrocarbons should make specific reference to Regulation 36 titled “Mineral Hydrocarbons” (with necessary reference to the Food Control Division of the AVA) to ensure that the products being exported to Singapore fully comply with the law on content and usage of these products.

## **VII Other Regulations and Requirements**

### ***Expiry date marking***

The Table below provides a list of the products which are required to be labelled with an expiry date. This list is officially set out in the Third Schedule to the Food Regulations (see Appendix F to this report). Date marking of prepacked food products has come under higher levels of scrutiny by the authorities since the Food Control Division of the AVA (FCD) banned the use of expiry date sticker-labels in April 2002.

Some key points to note are as follows:

- Expiry date information is required to be permanently printed or embossed on the labels of products listed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Schedule of the Food Regulations along with the particulars of the importer or manufacturer. Expiry date sticker labels are no longer permitted for use on these products.
- The FCD defines the expiry date of a food product as “the date after which the food, when kept in accordance with any storage conditions indicated on the label of that food, may not retain its normal nature and quality”.
- The expiry date appearing on a product’s label should be qualified by using words such as “USE BY”, “SELL BY”, “EXPIRY BY”, “BEST BEFORE” or words of similar meaning.
- Where the expiry date is dependent upon a particular method of storage, e.g. perishable products such as liquid milk, directions for storage must also be stated on the label or package. The following example is cited by the FCD:

“BEST BEFORE: 31 Oct 99. Store in a cool dry place.”

- The expiry date for short shelf life products must include the day and the month. The year in the expiry date mark of such products is optional. Short shelf products include pasteurised cream, milk and yoghurt, juices, soybean products and other products that require chilling to maintain or prolong its durable life.
- The expiry date of the other foods covered by this regulation must include the month and the year. The day in the expiry date mark of such products is optional. These products include vitaminised fruit and vegetable juices and juice drinks, liquid milk (UHT and sterilised forms but not canned condensed products), flour, salad dressings, mayonnaise, raisins and sultanas, chocolate products, breakfast cereals (except in cans), infants’ food and edible oils.
- The expiry date is required to be clearly displayed on the package in letters not less than 3 millimetres in height.

### ***Requirements on import of bottled natural mineral water, spring and drinking water***

The Food Regulations contain detailed regulations which include provisions covering official product definitions and content, advertising and labelling. Water cannot be advertised, labelled or sold as natural mineral water unless documentary evidence is provided to the Food Control Division of the AVA (“FCD”) which verifies the place of origin and that the product is genuine. The laws are strictly enforced.

The FCD requires that importers applying to import bottled natural mineral water, spring and drinking water into Singapore are required to submit the original copy of a certificate issued by the government

controlling authority in the product's country of origin. This certificate should:

- Certify that the natural mineral water, drinking or spring water is genuine.
- Include details of the product's brand name, importer's particulars and the source from where the water was obtained.

A copy of the site plan showing the water source is also required to be provided with this certificate.

This certificate is required to be submitted to the FCD once and before commencement of import of the product.

In addition to the above requirement, every batch of bottled water that is imported into Singapore is required to be accompanied by a Health Certificate issued by the government controlling authority in the product's country of origin. This certificate is required to be submitted to the FCD prior to or on arrival of each consignment.

### ***Importation of irradiated food***

The import or sale of food that has been exposed to ionizing radiation is prohibited except under a licence specifically issued by the Food Control Division of the AVA for each consignment of irradiated food.

This law also covers irradiated food ingredients.

Every consignment of irradiated food imported to Singapore is required to be certified that:

- The irradiation treatment has been conducted in accordance with the CODEX Recommended International Code of Practice for the Operation of Radiation Facilities Used for the Treatment of Foods; and
- The irradiated food meets the CODEX General Standards for Irradiated Foods.

Irradiated foods, foods containing irradiated ingredients and irradiated food ingredients are required to clearly disclose on their label that they have been irradiated or contain irradiated products.

### ***Import, sale and use of artificial sweeteners***

A valid licence issued by the Food Control Division of the AVA (FCD) is required for:

- The sale, import, usage, advertising, manufacture, consignment or delivery of permitted artificial sweetening agents; and
- The import and sale of food and drinks containing permitted artificial sweetening agents.

Currently, the licence is issued on an annual basis, subject to review before renewal and payment of a licence fee. The period of the licence can be varied by the FCD.

Artificial sweetening agents are chemical compounds used for the purpose of sweetening food and drinks. The products that are permitted for sale and use in Singapore are:

- Saccharin.
- Acesulfame-k (Potassium Salt of Acesulfame)
- Sucralose.

Artificial sweetening agents do not include aspartame, any sugar or other carbohydrate or polyhydric alcohols. According to the FC D, polyhydric alcohols include products such as sorbitol, mannitol, isomalt, maltitol, lactitol and xylitol.

Approval of an artificial sweetening agent licence can be obtained if the following conditions are found to be fully satisfied by the FCD:

1. The reason for the use of artificial sweetening agent(s) in food and drink products must be technological justified, e.g. the products are special purpose foods such as low-calorie food or sugar-free food for diabetics.
2. The food containing the artificial sweetening agent(s) must fully comply with the standards as laid down in the Food Regulations.
3. All food containing artificial sweetening agent(s) must be properly labelled. As mentioned in an earlier section of this report, food containing artificial sweetening agents are required to disclose usage and the nature of the product on its label.

## **VIII Other Specific Standards**

### ***Microbiological standards for food***

Under the Food Regulations, no food or drink product ready for human consumption can be contaminated with:

- Escherichia coli exceeding 20 per gm or per ml, in the case of liquid products; or
- With any pathogenic micro-organism.

The specific regulations on microbiological standards for foods are to be read and interpreted with reference to Schedule 12 of Food Regulations (see Appendix G to this report).

In addition to the standards in this Schedule, the Food Regulations also set limits on the mould count for

tomato products. Specifically, the mould count in tomato juice and other comminuted tomato products, i.e. ketchup, puree and paste, shall be no more than 20% and 40% of positive fields respectively. The percentage of microscopic fields is to be examined in accordance with the method laid down by the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists, USA.

### ***Advertising standards***

Advertising of food is covered by the provisions of the Food Regulations that cover labelling and information that is provided to consumers and users. Specifically, the regulations that misleading statements and certain types of claims must not be included on labels also apply to advertisements for food and drinks.

### ***Foods requiring special declaration to, and attention, by the controlling authorities***

The following range of foods require special declaration to, and attention, by the controlling authorities, the respective divisions within the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority ("AVA"):

- Soy sauce.
- Oyster sauce.
- Beancurd sheets/sticks.
- Flour/starch.
- Nuts.
- Corn.
- Irradiated food (covered elsewhere in this report).
- Mineral water (covered elsewhere in this report).
- Whisky.
- Brandy.
- Preserved fruits.
- Preserved vegetables.
- Agar agar.
- Eastern European foodstuffs.
- Genetically modified food (covered below).

The importer of these controlled items is required to contact the respective authorities by phone or by faxing the import permit to them for inspection and sampling.

### ***Genetically modified foods***

The Genetic Modification Advisory Committee (GMAC) was established in Singapore in April 1999 to ensure public safety, while allowing for the commercial use of GMOs and GMO-derived products by companies and research institutions in Singapore.

As mentioned in the previous section, genetically modified foods are controlled items in Singapore. They are subject to special declaration, review, inspection and testing procedures which are being implemented

by the respective divisions within the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority ("AVA").

Regulation and enforcement of the regulations, policies, procedures and practices covering GMOs is performed with reference to the Singapore Guidelines on the Release of Agriculture-Related Genetically Modified Organisms (Issued 20 August 1999). A copy of these guidelines is included in Appendix H to this report.

U.S. exporters and their importers in Singapore can refer to the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority ("AVA") for detailed information about the procedures and regulations that affect their GMO food, drink and agrifood products, including those that include GMO ingredients.

## **IX Trademark Laws in Singapore**

The basic trade mark laws are laid down in the Trade Marks Act (Cap. 332, 1999 Edition), as amended, which is enforced by reference to The Trade Marks Rules 1998, as amended. The main government agency to contact for trademarks is the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore, Ministry of Law.

Any person or corporation, whether local or foreign, who claims to be the proprietor of a trade mark used or proposed to be used by him in Singapore, may file an application for the registration of the trade mark.

Under this law, trade marks broadly include any letter, word, name, signature, numeral, device, brand, heading, label, ticket, shape, colour, aspect of packaging or any combination thereof which are used to distinguishing goods or services of one person/corporation from those of another person/corporation. The Intellectual Property Office of Singapore comments that:

- An example of a famous trade mark is Coca-Cola.
- Sound and smell marks are excluded from the definition of a trade mark.

The law provides for priority claims to trademarks by any person or corporations that has registered or has applied to register any trade mark in any of the member countries of the Paris Convention or The World Trade Organisation or a country or territory where a special order has been included in Singapore law.

In the above case, such a person/corporation is entitled to register his trade mark in Singapore in priority to other applicants, and the registration of his trade mark shall have the same date as the date of application in that country. It should be noted that there are special requirements to be complied with when filing a priority claim. U.S. manufacturers, exporters and their agents should refer to the Trade Mark Act and Rules and/or the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore on this matter if they wish to make a priority claim for registration of their trademark.

The effect of trade mark registration in Singapore does not extend beyond the territorial boundary of Singapore.

It is not compulsory to register a trade mark in Singapore. The Intellectual Property Office of Singapore comments that:

- Where a trade mark remains unregistered, the owner must rely on the common law action in cases where other persons/corporations use his trade mark without permission. Such legal action can involve long and costly litigation.
- Registration of a trade mark provides its owner with a statutory monopoly over the trade mark. As a result, he can sue for infringement of his registered trade mark if someone else uses the same or similar mark on the same or similar goods and/or services in respect of which the mark is registered.

## **X Import Procedures**

### ***The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and its goals***

Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (“AVA”) is Singapore’s national authority responsible for ensuring the safety of primary and processed foods and protecting the health of people, animals, fish and plants through advanced technology in agriculture, fisheries, veterinary science and the life sciences. It regulates both locally produced and imported agrifood products and processed food and drinks.

The AVA strives to:

- Ensure food safety in Singapore by applying up-to-date food safety programs and systems for both locally produced and imported meat, fish, fruits, vegetables and processed food.
- Facilitate the supply of stable, safe and wholesome meat and meat products, fish and fish products, fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Safeguard the health of animals, fish and plants;
- Be a centre of excellence for tropical agrotechnology services; and
- Facilitate trade in primary produce.

### ***Overview***

Taxes and duties levied on import of these products is dealt with in Section I of this report titled Food Laws. This section covers:

- The import of processed food and drinks which are controlled by the Food Control Division of the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority.
- The import of meat and meat products, fish and fish products, fresh fruits and fresh vegetables which are controlled by the Import & Export and Food Inspection divisions of the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority.

### ***Import of Processed Food and Drinks***

The Food Control Division of the AVA (FCD) is responsible for the control of food safety, licensing and inspection of food factories in Singapore and for control of imports. FCD advise that:

- As of 15 November 2002, importers of processed food and drinks to Singapore are required to be registered with the FCD. Registration also covers declaring agents that import food products on behalf of individuals.
- Registration of importers is free and any person/business that is registered under Singapore's Business Registration Act or Companies Act is eligible to apply.
- Importers have to declare the category of products they will be importing when making the application.
  - < The basic categories are infant/baby food, dairy products, confectionery/bakery products, cereals, nuts and seeds, edible fats and oils, spices and condiments, pasta and noodles, sauces, food ingredients, processed vegetables and their products, processed fruits and their products.
  - < If the importer finds their product falls outside these categories they are required to declare the product details to the FCD when making their application.
- All registered importers are provided with a Registration Number by AVA, which is required to be used when submitting their TradeNet declarations. IE Singapore operates an electronic trade documentation systems known as TradeNet to facilitate import/export documentation.
- An import permit issued by the AVA is required for every consignment of processed food and drink products that are to be imported.
- Importers can apply for the import permits by declaring their imports through the TradeNet system.
  - < The TradeNet system will automatically route the declaration to FCD for processing. Upon approval, the import permit for the consignment is incorporated in the Cargo Clearance Permit supplied by the TradeNet system to the importer.
  - < Under this system, import permit applications that are not accompanied by the importers Registration Number will be automatically rejected by the system.
- The FCD has the power to inspect and test all products to be imported to Singapore.
- The FCD closely monitors a number of products that are referred to as controlled items (considered in an earlier section of this report).

### ***Import of Meat, Fish and Their Products and Fresh Fruits and Vegetables***

Traders who import, export or tranship meat products and fish products; and import or tranship fresh fruits and vegetables are required to be licensed by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority. Any person who is



registered under the Business Registration Act or company incorporated under the Companies Act is eligible to apply.

Exporters of meat and meat products, i.e. slaughterhouses and meat processing plants, are subject to evaluation of their ability to export meat to Singapore. The evaluation is performed by the AVA so that an exporter can be accredited by them to export to Singapore. The evaluation process is detailed and involves consideration of:

- Home country licensing to process and export meat and meat products.
- Location, layout and process flow of the factory/plant.
- Water supply and chilling/freezing facilities.
- Manpower, welfare and employee hygiene facilities.
- Slaughtering or meat processing premises, procedures, food safety aspects, inspection, etc.
- Verification by home country veterinary authority.

The information in the following sections has been taken from the AVA guidance notes on the import of products that fall under its area of jurisdiction.

## **2. Overview of AVA regulations**

### **2.1 Meat products**

#### **2.1.1 Definition**

Meat products includes the whole carcass or the parts of any animal or bird. Meat products may be imported in chilled, frozen, processed or canned forms.

#### **2.1.2 Import permit**

Meat products may only be imported into Singapore from approved sources. An up-to-date list of countries approved to export frozen meat to Singapore can be obtained from the AVA.

An import permit issued by the AVA is required for every consignment of meat products imported. Traders may apply for the import permit by declaring the import through the Tradenet system. The system will route the application to Import Control Section (Meat), AVA for processing. Upon approval, the import permit for the consignment is incorporated in the Cargo Clearance Permit printed at the trader's terminal.

#### **2.1.3 Documents required**

Every consignment of meat products imported shall be accompanied by a veterinary health certificate (original) certifying that Singapore's health requirements have been complied with. Other supporting documents like bills of lading, airway bills and invoices should also be submitted or faxed to the authority. The Unique Reference No. of the trade declaration should be stated on the top right hand corner of the documents.

#### **2.1.4 Inspection**

Every consignment of meat products imported shall be inspected by the AVA before sale is permitted. Traders are required to contact the Food Inspection Services Branch to arrange for the inspection. Samples may be taken for laboratory analysis.

#### **2.1.5 Others**

Meat products imported into Singapore must be shipped direct. All imports are subject to compliance with prevailing regulations laid down by the AVA. Veterinary requirements governing importation and the lists of establishments approved to export meat to Singapore are available on request.

Meat products may be exported from Singapore or transhipped at Singapore in reefer containers within the Free Trade Zone. An export or transshipment permit is required and the procedures to apply for the permit are similar to those for import.

#### **2.1.6 Storage of imported meat**

Imported frozen or chilled meat can only be stored at a coldstore or processing establishment that is licensed by the AVA for inspection and approval prior to distribution, sale or disposal.

#### **2.1.7 Special regulations regarding frozen or chilled pork**

The following regulations were imposed under the Wholesome Meat and Fish Act 1999 in July 2000:

- Imported frozen or chilled meat bone-in pork must be de-boned at a pork cutting/de-boning plant licensed by the AVA before the de-boned products are delivered to retail outlets throughout Singapore.
- Thawed frozen pork must be kept chilled and carry a label stating the following before the product is delivered to retail outlets:
  - a) The pork was thawed from frozen pork.
  - b) The pork should not be re-frozen.
  - c) The pork should be used within 3 days from ..... (the date of thawing) .....
  - d) The pork should be kept refrigerated.
- Only imported de-boned frozen or chilled pork can be delivered directly to retail outlets after inspection and approval by the AVA.

## **2.2 Fish products**

### **2.2.1 Definition**

Fish products refer to any of the varieties of marine, brackish water or fresh water fishes, crustacea, aquatic mollusca, turtles, marine sponges, trepang and any other form of aquatic life and their young and eggs. Fish products here does not include the ornamental varieties.

Fish products may be in chilled, frozen, processed or canned forms.

### **2.2.2 Import**

Fish products which are wholesome and fit for human consumption may be imported from any country.

Countries which export molluscan shellfish to Singapore will have to meet the basic requirements of shellfish sanitation programme. Live oysters may only be imported from approved sources. The countries approved for such exports are Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, The Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom and USA. The import of chilled shucked raw oyster, chilled cockle meat, chilled cooked prawn/shrimp and chilled crab meat is prohibited.

An import permit issued by the AVA is required for every consignment of fish products imported.

Traders may apply for the permit by declaring the import through the Tradenet system. The system will route the declaration to Import Control Section (Fish), AVA for processing. Upon approval, the import permit for the consignment is incorporated in the Cargo Clearance Permit printed at the trader's terminal.

### **2.2.3 Documents required**

Traders importing fish products should submit or fax to the authority supporting documents such as invoices, bill of lading or airway bills for processing. The Unique Reference No. of the declaration should be stated on the top right hand corner of the documents.

For high risk items like live/frozen oysters, frozen blood cockle meat, frozen cooked prawns and frozen cooked crab meat, a health certificate (original) issued by the relevant government authorities is required.

### **2.2.4 Inspection**

Imported fish products are subject to inspection. Samples may be taken for laboratory analysis.

In the case of frozen oysters, frozen blood cockle meat, frozen cooked prawns and frozen cooked crab meat every consignment imported must be inspected by the AVA before sale is permitted. As a result, every consignment of these products will be automatically detained for inspection and testing. Traders are required to contact the Food Inspection Service Branch to arrange for the inspection.

### **2.2.5 Others**

All imports of fish products shall comply with prevailing regulations laid down by the AVA. Health requirements governing the importation of the above-mentioned high risk items are available on request.

Fish products may be transhipped at or exported from Singapore. The procedures to apply for such approvals are similar to those for import.

### **2.2.6 Storage of imported fish and seafood**

Imported frozen or chilled fish and seafood can only be stored at a coldstore or processing establishment that is licensed by the AVA for inspection and approval prior to distribution, sale or disposal.

## **2.3 Fresh fruits and vegetables**

### **2.3.1 Definition**

Fresh fruits and vegetables refer to unprocessed and raw fruits and vegetables without roots which are intended for human consumption. The import, export or transhipment of processed fruits and vegetables are not under the jurisdiction of AVA.

### **2.3.2 Import**

Fresh fruits and vegetables which are fit for human consumption may be imported from any country. According to the AVA any country can supply its fruits and vegetables to Singapore providing the products can comply with the AVA's pesticide residue requirements. Some countries in Central American/Caribbean region also have controls placed on their ability to export fruits to Singapore for phytosanitary reasons.

An import permit issued by the AVA is required for every consignment of fruits and vegetables imported. These permits are only issued to traders who are licensed by the AVA.

Traders may apply for the permit by declaring the import through the Tradenet system. The system will route the declaration to Import Control Section (Fruits & Vegetables), AVA for processing. Upon approval, the import permit for the consignment is incorporated in the Cargo Clearance Permit printed at the trader's terminal.

Proposed imports of GMO fruits and vegetables have to notified to the AVA for special consideration prior to import and their import is required to be approved by the AVA. Failure to comply with this requirement will lead to an order being made to return the consignment of GMO products to its country of origin or a third country. Alternatively, an order can be made to have the consignment destroyed under AVA supervision.

### **2.3.3 Inspection**

All imported fresh fruits and vegetables are subject to inspection. Samples may be taken for laboratory analysis.

According to the AVA, imports are now systematically sampled. The AVA conducts tests for pesticide residue in accordance with internationally recognised protocols and adopts Maximum Residue Limits as prescribed by CODEX, the international food safety agency, and the Food Regulations of Singapore.

#### **2.3.4 Others**

All imports of fresh fruits and vegetables shall comply with prevailing regulations laid down by AVA. The products imported shall not contain pesticide residues or toxic chemical residues exceeding that prescribed under rule 9 of The Control of Plants (Import & Transhipment of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables) Rules.

The following information shall be stated on the containers of the fresh fruits and vegetables at the time of import:

- Name and address of the producer of the products;
- Product description; and
- Date of export/packing.

Fresh fruits and vegetables may be transhipped through Singapore. The procedures to apply for such approval are similar to those for import.

#### **Appendix I - Government Regulatory Agency Contacts**

Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority  
5 Maxwell Road, #03-00  
Tower Block, MND Complex  
Singapore 069110

Tel: (+65) 6325 7313 (Fresh and frozen meat and produce)  
Fax: (+65) 6220 6068 (Fresh and frozen meat and produce)  
Tel: (+65) 6325 2579 (Processed food and beverages).  
Fax: (+65) 6324 4563 (Processed food and beverages)  
Website address: [www.ava.gov.sg](http://www.ava.gov.sg)

Activity: Regulatory body covering meat, poultry, fish, seafood, fruits and vegetables and processed food and beverages.

International Enterprise, Singapore (IE Singapore)  
230 Victoria Street, #09-00  
Bugis Junction Office Tower,  
Singapore 188024

Tel: (+65) 6337 6628

Fax: (+65) 6337 6898

Website address: [www.iesingapore.com](http://www.iesingapore.com)

Activities: Controls import trade documentation system.

Customs & Excise Department

Singapore Government

55 Newton Road,

#02-01 Podium Block, Revenue House,

Singapore 307987

Tel: (+65) 355 2000

Fax: (+65) 250 9606

Website address: [www.gov.sg/customs](http://www.gov.sg/customs)

Activities: Collects tariffs and excise duty on relevant imports. Includes the Liquor Licensing Board.

Intellectual Property Office of Singapore

Ministry of Law

51 Bras Basah Road, #04-01,

Plaza by the Park,

Singapore 189554

Tel: (+65) 6339 8616

Fax: (+65) 6339 0252

Website address: [www.ipos.gov.sg](http://www.ipos.gov.sg)

Activities: Oversees registration of trade marks. (Note also deals with patents)

## **Appendix II - Other Contacts**

U.S. Department of Agriculture

American Embassy Singapore

541 Orchard Road, #15-03,

Liat Towers,

Singapore 238881

Tel: (+65) 6737 1233

Fax: (+65) 6732 8307

E-mail: [AgSingapore@fas.usda.gov](mailto:AgSingapore@fas.usda.gov)

Myepb Bookstore

3 Temasek Boulevard, #B1-025,

Suntec City Mall

Singapore 038983

Tel: (+65) 6333 9703

Fax: (+65) 6333 9236

E-commerce website: [www.myepb.com](http://www.myepb.com) (For orders)

Activity: Official retailer for government legislation, including the Sale of Food Act (Chapter 283) and its amendments.

END OF REPORT